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direction of buffalo." That is why he is called *kusɛɛmini*, "asking about the buffalo." Ravens also were buffalo pointers in Comanche belief. They like to eat carrion and were always following the herds to eat the bugs on their hides. When a raven circled over the camp four times, dipping his head and cawing, "he was telling The People where the herd is; he will fly off and show the way."[42]

224 796

Toward the end of or soon after the hunt, a man and wife of respectable family who were noted for their goodness and purity were likely to give a Buffalo Tongue Dance or feast. Men, women, and the older unmarried adolescents who had participated in the hunt were encouraged to attend. The ceremony began early in the morning and ended with the meal at midday. A fire was built outside the tipi and the buffalo tongues were roasted over the coals. When the meat was done, the men were asked to seat themselves in a semicircle about the fire. The women took a position about twenty steps from the opening of the circle. The host or a leading medicine man lighted the pipe. He blew the first puff of smoke toward the sun, the second toward the earth, and one in each of the four directions. The pipe was then passed to the other men who smoked likewise. This was an oath by which the smoker bound himself to speak truthfully.

After all had smoked, a woman was called upon to come forward and serve the tongue. Any man who had had illicit sexual relations with her called out, "no, no," and she returned to her place. If everyone remained quiet, she came forward and served the tongue to the assembled group amid much applause and shrill cries of "li-li-li-li" from all the women present. No dancing or singing accompanied the ceremony.[43]

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This little act was lifted bodily from the Sun Dance complex of other Plains Indians. A Cheyenne Sun Dance giver must collect hundreds of buffalo tongues to distribute to the Sun Dance officers and participants. The Crow ritual called for an "absolutely virtuous woman to serve as Tree-notcher, one who had been purchased in marriage and had been scrupulously chaste."[44] Virtue was tested in a manner similar to that just described. Among Indians like the Crows

[837]

[42] Informant: Post Oak Jim.

[43] Informants: Kills Something; Face Wrinkling Like Getting Old. Other informants were aware of this ceremony.

[44] R. H. Lowie. *The Crow Indians*, 312.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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and Comanches, who really did not expect much in the way of marital fidelity, the stunt seems to be a little meaningless. Among the Cheyennes, however, who originally built up the Sun Dance complex,[45] family virtue was actually adhered to, and every military society had four virginal maidens as essential ritual assistants. As an adjunct of Comanche buffalo tongue banquets, ritual chastity had no place, but as a chance for good-humored teasing it seems to have appealed to the Comanche sense of a good thing.

Had the Comanches and other Plains Indians been left undisturbed by intruders, the buffalo might have supplied their needs indefinitely. But the white man pushed ever relentlessly westward, and intruding Indian bands along the border of the Comanche country began to trespass upon the Comanche hunting grounds. The effects of these encroachments on the country soon began to be felt in a vital way—in the diminishing supply of buffalo. The period between 1830 and 1860 witnessed such destruction that the hunters found it increasingly difficult to sustain their families by hunting.

During the colonial period in Texas, buffalo were seen as far south as the vicinity of the present city of Houston. As early as 1833 explorers and adventurers in the region of the Arkansas and Canadian rivers had begun to observe that the eastern edge of the buffalo range was retreating westward rapidly. The Osage agent wrote in 1841 that his Indians had to extend their hunting operations each year farther and farther into the plains to obtain even a scant supply, and that it would soon be necessary for them to learn to farm.[46] In 1846 it was estimated that one hundred thousand buffalo cow hides annually reached the Canadian and American markets. The bull hides were then regarded as worthless for commercial purposes. At the same time Torrey's Trading House was getting three dollars each for ordinary, and eight dollars for choice, hides.[47] It is difficult to determine how extensively professional white hunters operated during the period be-

[45] L. Spier, "The Sun Dance of the Plains Indians," American Museum of Natural History *Anthropological Papers*, XVI, Part 7 (1921).

[46] Agent Wm. Armstrong, *Annual Report*, 1841, 27 Cong., 2 sess., *House Exec. Doc.* 2, No. 34, 316–17.

[47] C. C. Rister, "The Significance of the Destruction of the Buffalo in the Southwest," *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIII (1929), 34–39. Torrey's was the official company of the Republic of Texas for trading with the Indians.

9: Gladwin E-5 (1940) 1948 NO6 Comanche NO6

593 extent of opposite sex, is considered to be one of the closest. It is often said that his brothers are more dear to a man than his wife, and this is given as the reason why a man shares his wife with his younger brothers in a polyandrous [837] household. Men often leave their wives with their brothers when they go off on war-parties, and most people take it for granted that the brother will sleep with her during this time. Damage claims for wife stealing are practically never made upon brothers. It is a brother relationship to which the closest friends aspire, and they will often call each others' families by terms appropriate to this relation. Sisters, on the other hand, form the most desirable [595] combination of wives if a man is to have several, for they get along better together than any other women, and are less likely to be jealous.

[554] The oldest brother has much greater prestige than any of the others, unless he should be a complete coward and failure and have a spectacularly successful younger brother. His position is unique, for, unless he should die very young, his removal through death or moving away will not lead to the elevation of the next oldest brother to a position of special prestige. In this society of warriors, boys from puberty onward are always considered greatly superior to their sisters.

Relations between brothers and sisters are highly variable, and depend greatly upon the personalities of the individuals. The ideal picture is one of fondness and mutual help and kindness. Brothers bring their sisters horses when they return from raids, and will take their side and protect them in case of trouble; they frequently leave their wives with their sisters who will act as chaperones while they are away. A sister will care for her brother's horse when he comes in and perform many minor services for him; she may act as a messenger for an unmarried brother in arranging nocturnal trysts. But these and many other expressions of esteem and affection are only evident if they like each other.

[857] The other side of the picture reveals the fact that the oldest sibling present [576] is the boss of the others until they come of age. As the boys used to go out on war-parties as soon as they were old enough, this was usually an older sister. [195] She frequently whipped her brothers as a disciplinary measure, and often delighted in teasing them in various more or less nasty ways. The word *it'rɨ?aiwapɨ*, "slave," could be applied by an older sibling to a younger, though this was considered being particularly unpleasant, and nice children did not do it! It is significant that while it was presumably permissible, this appellation [605] was rarely if ever used between siblings of the same sex. It is emphatically stated, incidentally, that this was never applied to cousins except as a joke.

593 Once a boy passed puberty, he usually went out on the warpath, and was therefore in imminent danger of being killed. For this reason, it is said, one 882 should let him have his way in all things. The boys do not seem to have been beyond capitalizing on this, and could and occasionally would whip their sisters even after they were married. It was the brother, more than anyone else, who

10:Horn T-3 (1836-1837) 1955
NO6 Comanche NO6

conciliate the favor of, the Author of the war of elements, I could not determine. Another circumstance induced me to think they might have some notions of a future state. There was a young woman among them, who certainly possessed some traits of character more amiable by far than the most of her race with whom I was acquainted; she sickened and died, when their grief, as usual, was unbounded. I observed to one of the females, that I hoped she was better off than when here; – she smiled, and pointed upwards. The strength of their attachment to each other, and the demonstration they give of the same, even to the dividing of the last morsel with each other upon the point of starvation, might put many professed christians to the blush! But they are just the reverse of all this to all the world beside. They think themselves the cleverest race of men on earth, and treat all others as infinitely inferior to themselves. They have no formal marriages among them. They generally take wives at an early age. Each man is allowed to take five women; but, in making his selection, the ties of consanguinity oppose no barrier; hence they are truly a consanguineous race of so motley a mixture, that it would be impossible to identify the connexions. The distinction, however, [50] might be less obscure, but for the fact, that with them matrimonial alliances oppose no restraint to promiscuous intercourse. The relation of the women to the men differs little from a state of the

22: Dacus Q-3 (no date) 1960 NO6 Comanche NO6
(ca. 1870)

and he may mutilate or beat her to the full extent of his capricious will. 593
In certain cases he is even permitted to take her life, without acknowledging responsibility to any one for his conduct. As among civilized people, 684
there are "common women of the tribe," outcasts from respectable Comanche society, just as there are outcasts from Christian society among the civilized people of Europe and America. These "Women" have no rights which Comanche ladies and gentlemen are bound to respect. The condition of slavery, which falls to the lot of all women of the tribe, is intensified in the case of the fallen. The others are slaves of one master only; these have many masters and many mistresses. According to our code of morals, the Comanche cyprian has been guilty of no crime, which all the females of the tribe who have arrived at the age of puberty have not committed. She has been unfaithful to the marriage contract, without consulting the wishes of her husband, and without bringing him any gain, and terribly is she made to suffer for it. She is beaten, with many stripes, [304]
and not infrequently suffers mutilation by having her nose cut off. This fixes the brand of her disgrace; and henceforth she becomes the slave of the tribe. There may always be seen a few of these miserable creatures about a Comanche camp. The women are especially cruel toward them, and take much apparent delight in beating them. And yet these same immaculate maidens and matrons have not once, but many times been made to endure the embrace of any purchaser at the behest of their husbands and fathers.

Custom has established laws among the Comanches as among more civil- 671
ized people. It is a law among them that a wife may be mutilated, or even 593
killed, for the crime of infidelity, and yet husband is not averse to select- 684
ing any number of lovers for her and compelling her to accept them, pro- 837
vided his worldly fortune is advanced thereby.

There is no prudish seclusion of Comanche maidens. They mingle with 834
great freedom among the people of their tribe. They may have their 584
beaux as well as their white sisters, and the gallants need have no fears of an over-prudent papa, or an irate "big brother." If there is a rough place in the course of the stream of affection, it is not the youth but the maiden that must suffer the castigation. A pony will suffice to satisfy the utmost requirements of the social law.

When a young Comanche gentleman takes it into his head to go a-wooing, 584
he decks himself with a profusion of paint, a gorgeous head-piece made 301
of feathers; dons his finest suit, puts on all the decorations of distinction 291
which he is entitled to wear, which usually consist of a necklace of wild- 237
cats' claws, coyotes' tails, the canine teeth of wolves, elks' teeth, and not

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 NO6 Comanche NO6

ambiguity of powers of the chieftains, it is not surprising that in this tribe there were no public officials endowed with law-speaking or law-enforcing authority. The law of the Comanche was neither legislative nor judge-made. It was, as we have written elsewhere, "hammered out on the hard anvil of individual cases by claimant and defendant pressing the issues in terms of Comanche notions of individual rights and tribal standards of right conduct."[3] Thus it was almost exclusively a system of private law: a system of individual responsibility and individual action; a law that was case made.

The Comanches surely had no love of legalistic formalism, but they were a most litigious people. Their way of life engendered considerable internal friction. It might almost be said that the Comanches savored trouble-making. Their own accounts of their war parties as often as not begin with a laconic "orice there was a bunch of Comanches out looking for trouble."

So, also, a man was often moved to take steps that made trouble. He stole another man's wife, or he secretly consorted with her. When this was done, the husband had no choice but to initiate legal action. Magnanimity on his part would bring no praise, for there was no doctrine of turning the other cheek. A man's status turned on his bravery, and for an offended husband not to act reflected merely on his courage; it was seen not as an act of forgiveness but as an expression of lily-livered cowardice. Wife-stealing and adultery were not the result of any sexual deprivation on the part of the offender; they were in effect deliberate challenges to the prestige of the husband. As such, he was forced in the eyes of the people to respond to them.

The way was open to him in legal action. Custom impelled men to violate the marital rights of other men. The culture also provided a legal remedy for the wronged man. Except in a few rare and extreme cases, the wrongdoer fully expected to pay the legal price—and did so without forcing the injured husband to a violent bodily attack. He knew well that he would have to pay a price, but he also knew that if he was steadfast and could outface the other man, the price would be light. In that case he would come out of the affair with greater public respect than the husband and he might get the woman to boot. So he took the risk.

In the memory of a dozen old Comanche informants still living in 1933 forty-five cases of old-time legal actions involving wife-stealing and adultery were still vivid enough for detailed recording.[4] Twenty-two were wife-absconding cases and twenty-three involved adultery.

As it takes two to make a contract it also takes two to commit adultery or a wife-absconding (Comanche women were not forcibly stolen). The woman's role in these affairs was very frequently an expression of individual revolt against the workings of Postulate III.[A] Theoretically in all instances,

[3] Wallace and Hoebel, p. 224.

[4] Cf. Hoebel, *Political Organization and Law-ways*, pp. 49–59.

A [see category 181, p. 69--Analyst]

29: Hoebel E-4,5 (1933) 1969 NO6 Comanche NO6

and actually in many, a girl had no formal voice in the choice of her husband. Her brothers gave her away in exchange for a consideration. The takers were usually older and established warriors and hunters who had the goods. In the Comanche ideal such arrangements made for the best marriages. But they were marriages in which the woman was at the mercy of her husband. Working against the stability of such marriages was a strong current of romantic idealism among the young. The ambition of the adolescent girl was to be a *naiβi*,[a] i.e., a beautiful maiden with lustrous, black hair hanging in long braids, and dressed in a fine fringed buckskin dress. The young bucks for their part strove to attract the attention of the girls by playing the role of *tuiβitsi*: "a handsome young man who looks good on a horse." Wife-absconding was really an escape in which a frustrated wife sought a more romantic match with a daring warrior.

Comanche elopements were invariably linked to a war party. The man in the case would be going on a raid with his friends, and he would make an assignation with the woman to go along. It was a way provided by custom to violate the marriage rights of the rightful husband as defined by custom and sustained by law! A nice example of internal inconsistency in the ways of a culture.

When a woman and her lover took off with a war party, two courses were open to the jilted husband. He could mount in hot pursuit in the hope that he could overtake them before they reached enemy territory. Or he could bide his time until they returned from the raid. In enemy country he could not press his suit; here all Comanches had to stand shoulder to shoulder. Aside from this, he could institute his action wherever he might be able to confront his tortfeasor. He might take along some compatriots—brothers, real or putative—to strengthen his courage and his arm, if need be. A real man, however, went alone. It was not necessary for him to gather witnesses, for a Comanche legal action was in no sense a trial. Questions of evidence rarely, if ever, entered. The wife-stealer, or even the adulterer, had no desire to conceal his deed; his aim was to flaunt his prestige in the face of the challenged husband.

If he followed the dictates of decorum, he politely addressed the defendant as "brother." The defendant replied in kind. Did not Comanche brothers share their wives? Syllogistically the reasoning runs:

> Men who share a wife are brothers.
> This man has assumed a share in my wife.
> Therefore, he is my brother.
> (But he is going to pay for the privilege!)

The immediate goal of the prosecuting husband was to get *nanɐwɔkɔ*, restitutive damages. As an opening gambit he placed his demands high,

[a] Phonetic symbols are used as in the International Phonetics System.